

Set	Items	Description
S1	78515	SOFTWARE OR (COMPUTER () PROGRAM)
S2	375	S1 AND (PRICING (5N) INFORMATION)
S3	0	S2 AND (JAVA (5N) APPLET)
S4	17	S2 AND JAVA
S5	685	PRIVATE () NETWORK
S6	1	S5 AND (PRICING () INFORMATION)
S7	605	INSTANT () MESSAGING
S8	0	S7 AND (PRICING () INFORMATION) (6N) (SOFTWARE)
S9	275	S7 AND (SOFTWARE)
S10	206	S9 AND (TRANSMIT OR DELIVER OR SEND OR MAIL)
S11	28	S10 AND (TRANSMIT OR DELIVER OR SEND OR MAIL) (7N) (SOFTWARE)
	RE)	
S12	7	S11 NOT PY>1999
S13	0	S2 AND (MULTI-MEDIA)
S14	25	S2 AND MULTIMEDIA
S15	16	S14 NOT PY>1999
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15/9/23

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01613812 Supplier Number: 47257296 (THIS IS THE FULLTEXT)

**Letting Prospects Sell Themselves**

Samit, Morris

Marketing Computers, p73.

April, 1997

ISSN: 0895-5697

Language: English Record Type: Fulltext

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Word Count: 1091

**TEXT:**

Morris Samit

The World Wide Web is a software company's dream, affording greater awareness, recognition, and 24-hour information access while reducing cost-per-lead, fulfillment costs, and cost of sales. Since standard sales and marketing activities are still required, the cost savings are reinvested in web marketing initiatives and applied to expensive development and technical support.

2 The web allows a software company to redirect major portions of marketing, sales, fulfillment and distribution functions to the web. At DSP Development, maker of DADISP, ([www.dadisp.com](http://www.dadisp.com)) an application software package serving a worldwide niche of engineers and scientists, we began our web presence inauspiciously, as many companies do, yet quickly realized the potential of the web, and just as quickly began capitalizing on its benefits.

3 At first we erred on the side of displaying lots of information on our site, but soon we began to organize, categorize, and update; still providing lots of information, but making it more viewer-accessible, delineating options to aid viewers in finding a particular area of interest without having to wade through all the company information. Too often, we found, viewers spend time wading rather than surfing, so care was taken to segment and index information, allowing users to view what they wanted.

4 Weekly reports analyzing which pages were hit most and by whom showed that viewers were not interested in product and corporate marketing-filtered information delivered at them, but wanted questions answered about the company's products, making FAQ and What's New popular pages. Marketing management began to see that with the web, prospects control what they choose to read or review, as opposed to digesting image-controlled company information.

5 We placed our full-featured demo on the site, for downloading, having formerly mailed demos to prospects who receive many demos through the mail and have to be inspired to install them. With the web, the prospect decides to take the time to download and use the demo, based on an assessment of its value and benefit. This activity led to a major expansion of our web marketing activity. We reasoned that if we could get more people to visit the site, and download the demo, we had an efficient, inexpensive way of getting the demo to self-qualified prospects.

Analysis of the hits showed a great number of accesses from .edu addresses. DADISP has wide application in education, for both teaching and research, but the price of the product was cost-prohibitive as were the costs of marketing and selling; but we wanted to exploit its use as an educational tool. We surmised that we could produce a slightly modified version of DADISP that would not cannibalize commercial sales, and offer it free, downloadable from the web. While the demo precluded use of the user's own data, this Student Edition would permit data import and export of live files, and contain all the functions of the software and on-line documentation.

The high volume of Student Edition downloads required a mirror site to be quickly added. The volume of downloads by faculty led to the creation of a grant program, offering the full commercial version. And, all of this was done with little traditional selling. We did execute an aggressive campaign of direct mail, telemarketing, and on-campus visits to the major engineering schools in the country, alerting them to the availability of free DADiSP from our site. When the fall semester began, this activity was repeated, to reinforce DADiSP's presence.

Analysis of the hits also showed that non-academics were illegally downloading the Student Edition. We reasoned that these individuals downloaded the Student Edition rather than the demo because they wanted to enter their own data, and output the results of their analysis, which was not possible with the demo. Our marketing strategy was that the limited data file size in the Student Edition rendered it of limited use in commercial applications, so commercial downloaders of the Student Edition would opt to buy the full commercial version.

This led us to a critical strategic selling and distribution decision: deciding to place the full commercial version on the web where it could be downloaded and used on a 30-day license basis. Code was added to the software requiring the user to obtain, via email, a password to activate the 30-day trial; and, if not purchased by the end of that 30-day period, the software would become inoperable. In this way, the selling process is in the hands of the prospect.

Two main advantages were the reduction of telephone time and the shortening of the qualification process. Typically, many phone calls are made before contact with the prospect, with many more before a demo is made. Time passes, and the prospect's initial interest may wane. Additionally, 30-day licensees are issued an activating password, so they purchase the actual product that they have downloaded, thereby eliminating disk and shipping costs.

Under the web-based scenario, prospects self-qualify by viewing the pages, downloading software, reviewing and testing it, etc., all without speaking to a salesperson, or waiting for literature to arrive, then trying to remember why they wanted it. After some time on the web page, if prospects want more information or think the product or service may be useful, they can approach us for technical or pricing information, by email, rather than playing telephone tag.

As to informing the prospect base, some basics remained such as adding the URL to all printed company materials. More effectively, an extensive direct mail campaign was launched, not selling, but advising and directing readers to the web site; stating what's there, what's free, and the URL. No selling or qualifying! Let the site and the prospect do this. We have extended this process such that, now, if someone requests information via fax, mail, bingo response, etc., they're directed to the web. Mailings are made regularly, building a database of those who have downloaded software, taken advantage of the free offer or requested information. This self-selected database also receives follow-up emails, providing notification of discounts and new releases.

From the company's side of the ledger, we are building a database of aware prospects, with concomitant cost savings in printing of brochures, demos, postage, shipping, and wasted telephone time. When a prospect and a salesperson finally speak to each other, they do so with an understanding that each has something to offer - quite a departure from the typical sales scenario. So, for the time being, the salesperson is still needed, but his or her time is better utilized.

Morris Samit is president of DSP Development Corporation in Cambridge, Mass. Email him at [morris@didasp.com](mailto:morris@didasp.com)

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**Software Industry Debates Pricing**

HFD-The Weekly Home Furnishings Newspaper, v0, n0, pS10

June 28, 1993

ISSN: 0746-7885

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Word Count: 1130

TEXT:

Too high or low, opinions and company tactics continue to differ

By Joseph J. Diorio

Anyone interested in an inexpensive, easy-to-use accounting software package for his or her personal computer can choose from a number of products - and an equally large number of prices for the same product.

Consider Intuit's Quicken, which is available at a neighborhood personal computer shop for about \$29.95, the computer superstore for \$19.95, or directly from Intuit for \$8.

Well, not exactly \$8. Intuit is offering a 'free trial' on Quicken whereby users pay \$8 covering the cost of shipping and the diskette. If they like the program, they then send Intuit the balance of the \$29.95 suggested retail.

Still, it's an inexpensive way to obtain high-quality business software without going the shareware (inexpensive software obtained from electronic bulletin boards) route.

Intuit's all-over-the field pricing of its flagship product is just one example of aggressive price reductions undertaken recently by personal computer software manufacturers. While the term price war is mentioned cautiously by some - and not at all by others - it is apparent the suggested retail price of just about any product is as permanent as data on an unformatted diskette.

Many software companies - certainly the big players - are offering reduced introductory prices for their products. Consider that:

Microsoft earlier this year had an introductory price on its Microsoft Access database product of \$99, saying it would reset the price later (at press time, some retail outlets were selling Access for \$329.50),

Following suit, Lotus Development Corp. released its new spreadsheet, Improv, at an introductory price of \$99. At press time, Lotus said the product would stay at that price until the end of last month, and then would be set in the \$300-plus price range.

Peachtree Software out of Atlanta introduced its accounting package, Peachtree Accounting for Windows, at \$99. Subsequent releases of the product will be priced higher.

Proving there's nothing special about a \$99 price point, MECA Software introduced the latest version of Managing Your Money with an \$8.50 special price. Like Intuit, users pay \$8.50 to try the product, and pay the balance of the \$29.95 retail price if - and only if - they like the product.

Not everyone is playing the price game, however. Many software companies are staying put on pricing, although their prices are low in comparison to those companies offering the lower 'special' or 'introductory' price. For instance:

DCA Software noted its Crosstalk product is, has been and probably will continue to carry a suggested retail price of \$189. 'We don't think introductory prices are fair to our customers,' said spokesperson Kerry Stanfield.

ChipSoft does no aggressive pricing on its income tax preparation products, TurboTax and MacTax. Alan Gleicher, president of the personal

products division at ChipSoft, noted that TurboTax often sells for as much as \$30 below the suggested retail price of \$79.

'Products from MySoftware Co. sell for \$14.95 to \$50. 'All software is overpriced,' said company founder Jim Willenborg.

#### A Price War?

If software is overpriced, as Willenborg contends, then companies are doing something about it. To many participants in the industry, the words 'price war' are about as welcome as a parent seeing 'some assembly required' on a present bought for the kid at Christmas. But industry analysts say there is definitely a trend toward lower prices in the industry.

'It is unquestionably a trend,' said Abhijeet Ronnie, an analyst with Link Resources, a New York-based industry consulting group. He noted the dramatic growth in the installed base of PCs - which stood at 27 million households having at least one PC in 1992 - has given software companies more flexibility in setting prices. In other words, in the days when only the big corporations were using PCs, software prices were stable (read - expensive). Now that the install base is so large, the prices can come down.

A lot of those PCs are being sold with software installed. 'You're getting about \$150 worth of software on the PC when you buy it,' noted Bob Kendig, executive vice president of Office America, the office products superstore chain with 22 outlets in the Mid-Atlantic States and Midwestern U.S. 'There's an expectation among consumers that they'll get certain programs on their computers when they make their initial purchase.'

That expectation, he noted, also helps drive down the cost of software.

Business productivity software is also competing in retail outlets with inexpensive shareware. Office America, for instance, carries an abundance of shareware products for under \$10. Kendig said his stores carry more than 300 different titles of commercially known software, and about another 80 titles of shareware. So large a selection means he doesn't carry a lot of any one title.

Also, industry insiders note, the migration by more and more of those PCs to a Windows operating system environment is opening opportunities in the software replacement market. That is, PC users are looking Windows versions of their favorite applications.

'It (aggressive pricing) is the best way to keep market share,' said Link's Ronnie.

'It's also a good way to gain market share. Just ask Borland International, which claims responsibility for all the aggressive pricing that's going on. 'When we introduced QuattroPro (a spreadsheet) in 1988, we had zero name recognition,' said Borland spokesman Steve Grady. 'We had to do something to gain market share.'

So rather than selling QuattroPro at its suggested retail price of \$495, Grady said the company introduced it at \$99. From Borland's standpoint, it was worth it. Did Borland take a hit on profitability by offering QuattroPro at such a low price? Not when there is a zero market share, said Grady.

What's so special about the \$99 price point? 'At 99 bucks, anybody would try the product,' said Grady.

'It's certainly less expensive than something in the \$300 range,' said Eileen Rudden, vice president of product marketing for Lotus Development Corp. Rudden said Lotus frequently uses the \$99 price point as a product introduction tactic. '\$99 is much closer to a discretionary purchase price,' she noted.

Lotus doesn't 'follow the pack' on pricing, said Rudden, but it does watch what Microsoft does. 'If we're going to follow anyone, we might as well follow the leader.'

MySoftware's Willenborg, who contends all software is overpriced, said

he figured the PC software industry would eventually come to the point where every product costs about \$10. 'All of our research indicates that, of the criteria people use to buy software, the top three are price, price and price,' he said.

Willenborg scoffs at the idea of introductory pricing. 'If \$99 is the right price to introduce it, then it's the right price to sell it. If anything, the price should go down as the product gets older,' he said.

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01212527 Supplier Number: 42273116 (THIS IS THE FULLTEXT)  
GE Commits to Quick Response: Dealers get opportunity to check firm's stock  
around the clock; deliveries within 48 hours

HFD-The Weekly Home Furnishings Newspaper, v0, n0, p105

August 5, 1991

ISSN: 0746-7885

Language: English Record Type: Fulltext

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TEXT:

By James A. McConville

LOUISVILLE, Ky. - Offering its dealer customers the promise of a competitive edge, GE Appliances has developed a program that links its customers to up-to-the-minute information on what inventory the large appliance maker has in stock.

Called the Quick Response Program, GE in essence sells its customers time on its on-line computer program, allowing them access to its inventory around the clock seven days a week. The system reportedly allows retailers to carry a minimum of inventory and be able to buy as their goods are sold.

The program, an experiment started approximately four years ago, was expanded to a full-fledged program this year. GE reported that it has about 900 subscribers.

Offered to the manufacturer's dealers, the service is accessed through their personal computers. Subscribers are supplied with software and pay an on-line \$9 an hour service fee for being hooked up to the service.

Retail customers must have an IBM compatible computer. GE provides free software for on-line access, and retailers must send some staff to GE training schools.

"We believe this is the way manufacturers and dealers will have to do business together in the future to be competitive," said Larry Johnston, vice president of sales and distribution, GE Appliances, "and to get as much productivity as possible (from a) selling relationship.

The computer hookup works in conjunction with GE's physical distribution and logistics system of nine mixing warehouses and 100 cross-dock locations across the country. It allows customers to view GE's inventory in the majority of markets and then receive delivery of those goods within 24 to 48 hours.

"Our customers can tap directly into our system and into our inventory 24 hours a day, 7 days a week," said Johnston. No other manufacturer is providing this real time on-line electronic linkage. We can pretty much guarantee our customers that within 24 to 48 hours we can deliver product almost anywhere in the U.S."

Customers also gain access to GE pricing information, product availability, and production schedules, said Johnston. "Quick response is more than just a fast delivery program, it's a program that has resulted from process improvements across our entire business - from forecasting, to manufacturing, to physical distribution, to customer service."

The program covers inventory from GE, Hotpoint, and RCA.

Another company, Whirlpool Corp., is also in the midst of starting its own customer response program to help dealers expedite ordering, according to a Whirlpool company spokesperson. However, details on the program were not available at press time.

The major benefit of the service for retailers: quick inventory availability and turnover. "It's as though your back room is expanded," said Johnston. "So instead of you carrying the inventory and the cost there, you can look at availability at your closest GE warehouse and see

what's actually available."

The service also reportedly increases a dealer's turnover capability.

"We have dealers on the system today generating 10-15-20 turns a year on their inventories, which was unheard of," said Johnston. "There's one dealer in Arkansas that gets 20 turns a year when he used to get four." The delivery service has cut down the time it takes for retailers to respond to changes in consumer demand patterns. "We're kind of headed toward a vision you might call 'made to order,'" noted Johnston.

"Rather than forecasting what consumers want three to four months from now, based upon history, which is what the industry has to buy," he added.

Johnson said quick response allows retailer access to information at odd hours of the week. "With our program, he (the retailer) can go right straight over to the PC, get online immediately and look inside the GE distribution center that serves his part of the country." The retailer then places the order, sets up the delivery and also sets up his own delivery to the customer.

Dealers can also use the on-line service to check their own sales data, and if the product is not in inventory, look at GE's future production schedules.

"What we're doing is shrinking the cycle from forecast to delivery," commented Johnston.

"It's kind of like having a warehouse without a warehouse," said Johnston. "It allows our customers to react to real consumer demand, carrying lower levels of inventory, which lowers their costs. ... It allows independent retailers to emulate the back room costs of a power retailer."

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SPECIAL FEATURES: INDUSTRY; COMPANY

ADVERTISING CODES: 32 Marketing/Advertising Methods

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6/9/1 (Item 1 from file: 625)  
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0238846

\* Northern Trust Adds Forex on Web for Custody Clients  
American Banker - June 23, 1999; Pg. 9; Vol. 164, No. 119  
SECTION HEADING: Technology  
ARTICLE TYPE: News; Main  
DOCUMENT TYPE: Journal LANGUAGE: English RECORD TYPE: Fulltext  
WORD COUNT: 470

BYLINE:

By ADRIANA SENIOR

TEXT:

Northern Trust Co. is delving into new Internet territory with a Web-based foreign exchange trading service.

The Chicago bank is the first to deploy a new system that it links with Dealing 2000, a Reuters system widely used by banks to match up buyers and sellers of foreign exchange. Reuters' new DealWeb takes advantage of standard Internet protocols, letting Northern Trust's institutional clients place foreign exchange orders directly.

The bank, which has \$1.3 trillion in custody accounts, is adding the on-line trading capability to its Passport system, a five-year-old, Web-based service for private and institutional clients.

The addition of FX Passport brings Northern Trust a step closer to the "holy grail" of client services—an integrated look and feel across the board, according to Lawrence Tabb, group director for the securities and investment practice at Tower Group.

Many institutional firms cannot provide such a unified service because they maintain a variety of systems on the back end, he said. Integrated front ends will be needed to serve clients that are expanding their foreign operations and clamoring for better pricing, information management, and news, he said.

Philip Herndon, a Northern Trust product manager, said the bank plans to offer custody clients the ability to trade other products over the Internet, such as money market instruments and derivatives.

Eventually, a full set of Web-based trading services will be integrated into both sets of Passport offerings, he said.

Northern Trust's Private Passport gives wealthy private banking clients Web-based access to a broad range of information and accounts. Passport for corporate institutions offers reporting on trust, accounting, fund risk and performance, some analytics, and global overviews for multinational businesses.

Letting institutional clients place orders directly on the Internet also should reduce Northern Trust's administrative costs. Previously, the bank received orders via phone or fax.

Dealers are having difficulty making profits with increasingly tight foreign exchange trading spreads, Mr. Tabb said. From that perspective, Northern's move is defensive, he said.

Patrick McDougal, executive vice president and director of foreign exchange at Northern, said the new on-line offering is a "natural extension" of interbank electronic foreign exchange.

Building the system using Reuters' proprietary DealWeb technology helped ensure security, Mr. McDougal said. Though DealWeb uses open Internet standards, it is still run by Reuters as a virtual private network.

DealWeb lets Northern Trust define the types of transactions that it wishes to handle directly or automatically.

Though DealWeb is not an order matching system, it links to Dealing 2000

to offer FX Passport clients current interbank foreign exchange price quotes, in addition to Northern's own quotes. FX Passport will also display Reuters market data and news, as well as internally generated news, research, commentaries, and other market-related information.  
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A Question of Will?

Promo, v0, n0, pS10

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TEXT:

The technology is on the ground. All that remains to make the most of scanner marketing - in contrast to using it merely for basic price and inventory controls - is the determination of the disparate elements of the distribution chain, including brand managers, wholesalers, retailers, category managers and the like, to integrate one or more of the various systems now on the market to move it forward. No small task, admittedly, but with efficient customer response (ECR) and other imperatives (including the possibility of eliminating \$30 billion of costs from the byzantine food distribution chain) pressing industry elements, the movement toward increased technology is unmistakable.

The benefits to consumers of scanner marketing are compelling: increased accuracy, lower costs, more sensibly targeted offers, tailored marketing and increased convenience. Manufacturers, too, can benefit dramatically and immediately: a better fix on performance of products that are sold to consumers (as opposed to those shipped to the warehouse or diverted after the initial sale), fewer chargebacks and compensation disputes, less fraud, lower costs and a better sense of where, when and why promotions are performing. Retailers are likely to benefit by just-in-time continuous product replenishment; quicker payment from manufacturers for promotions/coupons; the ability to implement category management techniques and disciplines; more complete, informative, timely and manipulative data on its customers and up-to-the moment electronic data interchange (EDI) capabilities.

The downside? Business as usual - diverting product, forward buying, slotting allowances, off-invoicing, deductions - becomes virtually untenable. With the implementation of scanner technology and marketing, the supermarket distribution system becomes, for the first time since the early 1970s, accountable.

A corollary: No one knows what the ultimate distribution system will look like, except that there is a general unfocused certainty that food marketing and food marketing promotions will emerge radically different.

Passionate arguments rage on in favor of or in opposition to one or another system: This one is totally blue-sky; that one is clunky, low-tech with no future; another is adequate but limited in potential. Yet the fierce dialogue, aided and abetted by deep-pocket vested interests.

The technology that may well end up as the industry standard, assuming that only one format will dominate, is conceivably being developed in someone's garage at this moment.

Perhaps the most promising of all scanner marketing applications is the ability of manufacturers and retailers to identify purchase activity, history and tendency down to the specific shopper. Though scanned coupons speak to the issue of promotion-generated product movement, the individual shopper escapes identification. But that is changing.

Few scanner-based systems currently incorporate or offer so-called frequent shopper program capabilities, but the impact of such capacity is tantalizing to marketers. It provides retailers with the ultimate in information-based marketing: An accurate and total fix on who's buying

what, when, where, for how much - even when they are likely to buy more. Brand managers, given this information, would be able to target shoppers and reward them for their loyalty through the use of cents-off coupons, for example, or to zero in with the same cents-off incentives on those who buy competitive brands.

Advanced Promotion Technologies (APT), the Pompano Beach, FL-based manufacturer incorporates multimedia technology that interfaces with scanner systems. Its checkout units can dispense instant coupons, coupons for future purchases and other assorted incentives or rewards. The terminals, which incorporate interactive touch screens, also approve checks and credit cards and can debit a customer's account. Consumers use the system, which is based on a personalized card incorporating a constantly updated embedded computer chip, to earn frequent shopper 'points' redeemable over time for free gifts. These 'paperless' credits and refunds are instantly awarded and deducted as promoted items are scanned. Paper coupons, recipes and informational messages can be printed instantly when products are scanned, or when the shopper touches the interactive screen in response to a prompt.

In addition to APT's system, retailers nationwide are forming their own independent card-based frequent shopper programs. The systems differ in complexity but common among all of them is that retailers know who is shopping, what they buy, and, perhaps most important, why.

#### Scan-validated couponing

If pay-for-performance is to become a reality, coupon scanning with validation is inevitable. (See accompanying story on page 11 to understand the basic structure of pay-for-performance.) The current systems of coupon processing include hand-counting, or gross weighing, of millions of non-standard-sized manufacturers' coupons, normally by agents that ship the coupons to clearinghouses in Mexico. Paper coupons are counted at least twice, often three times, by the various parties. Time-consuming and expensive discrepancies, adjustments and negotiations among supermarkets, manufacturers and redemption agents are now normal business practices and, most agree, inexact and frustrating.

Scan rates of 90 percent are being reported by retailers, according to CMS. Industry-standard EAN-99 may soon be adopted to bar code store-issued coupons, which will facilitate their being scanned by retailers that double coupons, but do not want to double store-issued coupons. In-ad coupons, too, may soon be bar coded so they can be scanned at the front end.

#### Change is needed

If scan-verified processing takes hold, the current method of coupon distribution will undergo fundamental changes. The scope of the changes depends a good deal on the nuances of the emerging systems and the inclinations of the industry participants: Would supplier rebates be applied at the P-O-S? Or would electronic (i.e., non-paper) coupons be treated the same way (presumably faster, however) as paper coupons are today? Or would paper coupons with bar-coded information (95% of all coupons currently have UPC-encoded data) be processed in a manner similar to, but subtly different from, the way paper coupons are distributed and redeemed?

Currently, according to CMS, 82.2% of coupons are distributed by FSIs; 3.6%, direct mail; 0.9%, newspaper ROP; 0.5%, magazine; 6.7%, in- or on-pack and instant; 1.7%, electronic checkout/shelf; and 4.4%, all others. Would retailers freely share the information gathered at the checkout line? Or would one market researcher obtain proprietary rights?

What is clear, however, is that few in the industry consider the current system of coupon redemption to be adequate for today's high-volume, high-stakes retail environment. Nor do many cite it as the prototype for the future. The system lacks efficiency, responsiveness, accuracy, timeliness, nor is it reassuring to payor or payee. The most convincing argument in its favor is that it works. The future, though, is gaining:

With more than 25,000 supermarkets (of a universe of about 30,000) currently scanning products, according to Progressive Grocer, the technological foundation for coupon scanning is well-established, even though only 12,000 stores now apply scanning technology to coupons.

By far, the majority of scanned coupons are scanned for pricing-information only (and possible inventory control). There are currently three levels of coupon scanning, according to CMS: value only, manufacturer ID and manufacturer ID with family code.

When the electronic coupon clearing (ECC) systems include family code level (and ultimately can scan a suffix code that would contain the manufacturer offer code) bar code information, ECC becomes an attainable goal. At present, only about 15 percent of coupons are bar coded with a suffix code.

According to CMS, ECC may take the following form:

'Using a retailer P-O-S system to capture the UPC and suffix code on each coupon scanned and validated eliminates the need for any counting and sorting of paper coupons. Coupons will simply be shipped from the stores to an audit center, where they will be held available for audit for several months, then destroyed. Or an audit of a sample of coupons can be done periodically.'

'Stringent and comprehensive controls will need to be developed based on the retailer's P-O-S system to assure each manufacturer that coupon redemption totals are accurate and that misredemption is virtually eliminated. Indeed, reliance on a system based on the retailer's P-O-S scanners ... could become the model for the industry,' according to CMS.

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On-Line Services

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BYLINE:

By DAVID O. TYSON

TEXT:

EQUATORIAL MESSAGES: Equatorial Communications Co. has started a private message system that runs on IBM PCs and compatibles.

Called Private NewsWire, the service enables subscribers to distribute text and graphics to multiple sites instantly using an Equatorial C-120 series

Micro Earth Station.

The transmission rate for unlimited usage is a flat \$25 a month per receiving site for networks of 100 or more locations, or \$35 a month for fewer than 100 sites.

The system's cc:MAIL software sells for \$295 a copy and is needed only for the originating site. C-120 Micro Earth Stations cost \$3,350 or can be rented for \$130 a month.

NEW DIALOG SERVICE: Dialog Information Services Inc. has started Dialog Business Connection, enabling subscribers to fetch data on more than 10 million public and private companies.

An applications-oriented product, it accesses several data bases, such as

Dun and Bradstreet, Standard & Poor's, and Moody's.

A \$145 start-up package includes \$100 worth of on-line time for orientation, a password, a user's guide, and an IBM-compatible communications software disk, though any ASCII device can access the service.

Connect charges are \$1.40 a minute, plus report charges. Dialog says a typical inquiry costs from \$5 to \$50, depending on the length of the report received.

Dialog Information Services is at 3460 Hillview Ave., Palo Alto, Calif. 94304. Telephone: 800-3-DIALOG.

VOICE SERVICE: Robert Thomas Securities, a Texas stockbroker, runs a voice mail service for its active customers.

Called Watson, the system costs \$495 and is manufactured by Natural MicroSystems Corp., Natick, Mass. It converts voice signals to digital format so they can be stored on a hard disk.

The system works with the IBM PC, XT, AT, and compatibles. The customer gets a circuit board, software, and a manual.

Twenty of Thomas Securities' 100 customers presently use Watson. Each day they receive brief voice messages updating their accounts and confirming trades, and a daily market summary by the branch manager.

Natural MicroSystems has an on-line demonstration of Watson at 800-6 WATSON.

Thomas Securities, located in Ingleside, Tex., is a subsidiary of

Raymond

James & Co., St. Petersburg, Fla.

BOND BUYER SERVICE: The Bond Buyer last week unveiled the first on-line service giving market participants access to daily price information on the

40 bonds in the Bond Buyer Municipal Bond Index.

The service enables underwriters and managers to get daily prices of the 40 fixed-rate municipal bonds that make up the index, designed by the Chicago Board of Trade.

Subscribers also get supplementary data on the bonds: issue description, coupon, maturity date, yield to maturity, first call date, premium at call, par call date, CUSIP numbers, and ratings of Moody's Investors Service and Standard & Poor's Corp.

The index is a joint venture of the Board of Trade and the Bond Buyer Inc., an affiliate of American Banker. The municipal bond futures contract was introduced in June 1985. Traders and institutions use the contracts to hedge their fixed-income investments and manage risks in their tax-exempt portfolios.

Subscribers to the on-line service get price information every business day at 3:45 p.m. EST and twice a day during contract settlement months. SOFTWARE ON GENIE: GENIE, the General Electric Network for Information Exchange, is in a three-month pilot program enabling users to upload public domain software for free. Those who download it pay regular connect charges.

"Effective March 1 through May 31, there will be no charge on GENIE during nonprime time for the uploading to the GENIE RoundTables of shareware or freeware that is in the public domain," William Louden, general manager of GENIE, said in the announcement.

GENIE has RoundTables for users of the IBM PC, Apple II, Apple Macintosh, Commodore, Commodore Amiga, Tandy, Atari, Texas Instruments, and lap-top computers. They store more than 3,000 public domain software files.

General Electric Information Services Co., a division of General Electric Co., operates GENIE.

USA TODAY ON TELNET: USA Today Update, the electronic information service of Gannett Co., now is available to Telemail subscribers on the GTE Telenet public data network.

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COMPANY NAMES (DIALOG GENERATED): American Banker ; Atari ; ASCII ; Bond Buyer ; Commodore Amiga ; Dialog Information Services Inc ; Dun and Bradstreet ; Equatorial Communications Co ; Gannett Co ; General Electric Information Services Co ; General Electric Network ; GTE Telenet ; IBM ; James & Co ; MicroSystems Corp ; Moody 's Investors Service ; Natural MicroSystems ; Raymond ; Robert Thomas Securities ; Standard & Poor 's Corp ; Tandy ; Texas Instruments ; Thomas Securities ?

10/9/45

DIALOG(R) File 570:Gale Group MARS(R)  
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01560767 Supplier Number: 46561027 (THIS IS THE FULLTEXT)

BytePro zeros in on channel to sell new software

Computer Reseller News, n693, p69

July 22, 1996

ISSN: 0893-8377

Language: English Record Type: Fulltext

Document Type: Tabloid; Trade

Word Count: 355

TEXT:

Newport Beach, Calif. - BytePro, a small software developer here, is turning toward the channel to sell its new software, Time & Profit.

"What we want to do is get a bigger database of users," said Paul Wendland, company vice president.

"When we get between 1,000 and 2,000 users, then we'll take it to the distributors. We want to make sure our users love the product before we bring it to the distributors," Wendland said.

BytePro developed the program with feedback from resellers and end users.

The company sent out information regarding its VAR/Certified-Consultant PRO Plan to around 1,000 resellers located across the United States.

Wendland is hoping to sign up an initial 20 resellers and add another 80 by the end of the year.

BytePro's sales plan offers resellers free support and training, technical notes, a free production copy of the software, price discounts and direct access to software developers.

The time/billing software keeps tracks of the user's schedule and prints daily, weekly and monthly calendars.

The company said the software also features a full accounting program.

"People want their accounting done for them. They don't want to think about it," Wendland said.

"The idea behind the software is to allow people to focus on their customers so they don't have to worry about the ancillary stuff," Wendland added.

BytePro is targeting sales to small and large law and accounting firms.

So far, Wendland has sold 400 units and expects, with the help of the marketing push, to sell 3,500 by the end of 1997.

"It's easy to install, easy to use and the graphics are good," said Alyse Rothman, a representative of Accountant, Stationers and Printers, an equipment reseller in Los Angeles who's thinking about selling the software.

Rothman added, "If I can understand it, anyone can."

The company plans this fall to release a network version of the software that will allow workstations simultaneous access.

Wendland and his sons, Brad and Lloyd, founded BytePro in 1990.

Prior to that, the three built and promoted Photodyne, a fiber-optic instrument manufacturer. They sold the company in 1988 to 3M Corp.

THIS IS THE FULL TEXT: COPYRIGHT 1996 CMP Media, Inc. Subscription:

\$189.00 per year. Published weekly.

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PUBLISHER NAME: CMP Media, Inc.

COMPANY NAMES: \*BytePro

EVENT NAMES: \*330 (Product information); 240 (Marketing procedures); 360 (Services information)

GEOGRAPHIC NAMES: \*1USA (United States)

PRODUCT NAMES: \*7372411 (General Accounting & Financial Software);  
5199737 (Computer Software Wholesale)  
INDUSTRY NAMES: BUSN (Any type of business); CMPT (Computers and Office  
Automation)  
NAICS CODES: 51121 (Software Publishers); 42143 (Computer and Computer  
Peripheral Equipment and Software Wholesalers)  
TRADE NAMES: Time & Profit  
SPECIAL FEATURES: COMPANY  
ADVERTISING CODES: 55 Company Planning/Goals; 57 New Products/Services;  
59 Channels of Distribution; 86 Business to Business  
?

/9/12 (Item 12 from file: 233)  
DIALOG(R)File 233:Internet & Personal Comp. Abs.  
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00372237 95IR01-001

**Oracle's push -- Selling through the Internet**

Maddox, Kate

Interactive Age , January 16, 1995 , v2 n6 p1, 60, 2 Page(s)

Company Name: Oracle

Product Name: Oracle Workgroup 2000

Languages: English

Document Type: Feature Articles and News

Geographic Location: United States

Reports that in a first for online commerce, Oracle Corp. will utilize the Internet to distribute copies of a new corporate software product, without regard to the possibility of theft. States that the company is expected to announce the online delivery of an Oracle Workgroup 2000 product line. Says other companies are evaluating the use of the Internet, however, most offer only demos. Reports that when asked about security, Nimish Mehta, Oracle vice president, desktop products division, said, ``Corporate America does not steal software'' and ``If there are pricing and availability barriers, we want to remove them.'' Says that to a certain degree the strategy is to develop brand marketing rather than merely sales. States that the company has set up a home page on the World Wide Web where they are extending a 90 day free trial period. Includes one photo and one screen display. (bjp)

Descriptors: Internet; Software Distribution; Corporate Strategy;  
Business

Identifiers: Oracle Workgroup 2000; Oracle

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4/9/14 (Item 14 from file: 570)  
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00009556 Supplier Number: 47917896 (THIS IS THE FULLTEXT)  
Tool Time  
Ng, Melissa  
Travel Agent, p68  
August 18, 1997  
ISSN: 1053-9360  
Language: English Record Type: Fulltext  
Document Type: Magazine/Journal; Trade  
Word Count: 783  
TEXT:

Corporate travel managers have a vast array of booking tools from which to choose

Melissa Ng

Travel managers who attended the recent convention and exposition of the National Business Travel Association were presented with myriad booking tools. The following is a sampling of some of the products that were showcased.

2 American Express launched its booking product, AXI, developed in conjunction with Microsoft Corp. Features include pricing and availability information, travel policy management, airline seat maps, city maps and guides, traveler profiles and access for travel arrangers. AXI, available only to Amex clients, is connected to SABRE, Apollo and Worldspan, and is accessible via a corporate Intranet or Extranet, or the Internet. The product, currently undergoing beta-testing, is expected to roll out this fall.

3 Edmonton, Alberta-based CEL Corp. (800-338-8491) has released a new Java version of its Intranet reservations system, Amerigo. Features include a policy enforcer, travel profiles, lowest-available-price displays, access to SABRE and Worldspan, and interfaces with a commercial travel and expense (T&E) package. Booking information goes directly to the client's travel agency.

4 New York-based DirectLink Technologies (800-683-0229) has launched the latest version of its online reservation system, Directlink 6.0. New features include a graphical interface, complete interface with SABRE and Apollo, travel compliance and hotel availability. Users can secure unlimited access by paying an annual licensing fee, or they can pay per transaction.

5 E-Travel (508-369-5565), currently linked to SABRE, Apollo and Worldspan, is working on new features and enhancements to its product of the same name that will be announced later this year. The Windows-based desktop booking product currently offers real-time-availability reservations for air, hotels and cars, as well as policy-management tools. E-Travel has been selected by Unisys Corp. and private-labeled as UniRes, which will be incorporated into Unisys' Outsourcing Division suite of travel solutions and services. In addition, E-Travel has signed a partnership agreement with ADP, whereby ADP will distribute E-Travel along with its own T&E management tool, e-XPENSE.

6 Internet Travel Network's (415-614-6300) enhanced Internet Travel Manager offers several new functions, including Air Contract Editor and Car Contract Editor, which allow managers to input and update their own contracts or negotiated rates. Travelers can now access driving directions, airline seat maps and destination information. A flight-tracking feature is currently undergoing beta-testing.

7 ResAssist (800-999-7956), developed by Travel Technologies Group, is promoting such new features as graphical maps with icons that indicate the traveler's seat location as well as those of colleagues, policy

administration and feedback forms. ResAssist currently interfaces with Worldspan, and will do so with SABRE in October and Apollo by the end of the year.

SABRE BTS' (800-722-7328) latest version of its corporate booking tool, SABRE BTS version 1.1, incorporates 'Trip Search' capability, which helps travelers determine the best air-travel options based on price. Another new feature is SABRE Negotiated Airline Plus (SNAP), which allows clients to access negotiated rates for carriers in one central database and ensure that the fares comply with existing agreements. Travelers can also use SNAP to compare negotiated fares with the lowest market fares. Features to be added later this year include seat mapping, upgrades and destination information.

System One Amadeus' (800-888-7971) expanded Corporate Circle program now offers new consulting tools for agencies and an online booking product, Corporate TripSolution. Corporate TripSolution, currently being beta-tested, is expected to roll out later this month. Features include instant online business travel itineraries, low-fare searches, real-time information 24 hours a day, storage of frequently traveled itineraries, policy management and enforcement, and cost-control.

TravelNet (800-333-2787) will be announcing upgrades and enhancements this fall. The company currently offers 24-hour accessibility through either a corporate Intranet or the Internet, real-time bookings, contract fare displays, policy-compliance reports and automatic authorization, and can interface with SABRE and Apollo.

Worldspan (800-842-7726) is promoting its Internet-based self-booking tool, Trip Manager, which began beta-testing last month with the Ann Arbor, Mich.-based BORDERS Group. A fall roll-out is scheduled, and an Intranet version is expected to be launched this winter. Trip Manager features include air, car and hotel booking; policy enforcement; preferred vendor and negotiated rate displays; and an automatic queue to a Worldspan agency for ticketing.

XTRA On-Line (800-USE-XTRA) has added features to its interactive reservation system, XTRA 3.0, including multiple air, hotel and car options; booking capabilities for more than one traveler; and policy enforcement. Travelers can also view and book negotiated fares online or save frequent itineraries for future use. Airline seat maps, weather reports and destination information are also available. XTRA, currently accessible through SABRE, will be linked to Apollo and Worldspan this month; a link to Amadeus is scheduled for September. XTRA is currently offering a 60-day free trial period; the offer expires on Aug. 30. TA

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PUBLISHER NAME: Universal Media, Inc.

EVENT NAMES: \*336 (Product introduction)

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INDUSTRY NAMES: BUSN (Any type of business); TRVL (Travel and Hospitality)

NAICS CODES: 51121 (Software Publishers)

ADVERTISING CODES: 25 New Electronic Marketing

?

/9/8 (Item 6 from file: 570)  
DIALOG(R) File 570:Gale Group MARS(R)  
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01727455 Supplier Number: 53857790 (THIS IS THE FULLTEXT)

Netting sales. (use of Internet in retail trade)

Donaldson, Doug

Do-It-Yourself Retailing, v176, n1, p55(4)

Jan, 1999

ISSN: 0889-2989

Language: English Record Type: Fulltext

Document Type: Magazine/Journal; Trade

Word Count: 2617

TEXT:

It's No Fish Story. Some Retailers Are Making Money on the Web.

Like an angler trying to figure out the right lure for a new stream, retailers continue testing the waters of the World Wide Web looking to land those elusive profits. Some stores have found few bites and believe selling on the Web is the one that got away. Others have netted some whoppers.

Sales in all categories over the Internet continue to increase, and on-line revenue from shopping will reach \$6.6 billion by 2000, predicts Forrester Research, a Cambridge, Mass., firm that tracks technology trends.

2 Already, more than 20,000 companies have Internet storefronts where customers can order items.

3 How big is the hardware part of this Internet sales force? In a recent National Retail Hardware Association survey, one-third of respondents said their stores had Web sites. Of those retailers, 32 percent sell products through their sites.

4 Like the non-virtual retail world, the big boxes are making their presence felt on the Internet as well. WalMart's site ([www.Wal-Mart.com](http://www.Wal-Mart.com)), for example, offers about 500,000 products compared to about 80,000 on the shelves of a regular store. Home Depot is still researching what products to offer on its site, and Lowe's recently posted a site selling its Kobalt line of hand tools.

5 And for those interested in the evolution of retail formats-meet the future. In October, an exclusively on-line hardware store ([www.superbuild.com](http://www.superbuild.com)) was launched.

6 "We're hoping to provide information to pass the barrier of customers wanting to see, feel and touch a product," says John Keuber, founder and CEO of the Seattle, Wash., Internet-only company. "We want to give consumers an opportunity to get knowledge of products before they buy. They can also see what products are good to use for a certain project."

7 Kueber wouldn't disclose sales or sale projections, but he did say he was happy with the first few weeks of the site's operation. The one-year-old company employs 12, with eight working on the site, which is updated daily. The site offers 30,000 products and fulfills orders in two days.

8 "Sales have been good, and power tools are a big draw," Keuber says. "Specialty items and paint have also been big sellers. I've been pleasantly surprised with the numbers so far."

#### FINDING THE FISHING HOLE

9 Retailers who have been successful selling hardware on the Internet say that, like fishing, stores must find a good fishing hole, or niche.

10 Thriftway Lumber Co. in Owensboro, Ky., sought its net niche with equipment for the handicapped and doors. The one-year-old site ([www.thriftwaylumber.com](http://www.thriftwaylumber.com)), even bills itself as having "the largest selection of doors on the net." To spur interest in that niche, the site features an ugly door contest. Net surfers can pick which one of 14 portals they'd rather not knock on. Those who cast votes also get a chance to win \$100.

While viewers of the site cannot purchase the dozens of doors modeled on the site, they can order more than 30 kinds of ramps for the handicapped.

"My wife is handicapped," explains Thriftway owner Ken Lawson. "Through the years, we've tested various ramps and come to know which ones are the best. That's how we got into the ramp business."

In addition to being able to purchase ramps, the Thriftway Lumber site offers about 30 other products from building calculators to generators. Lawson recruited high school students to create and maintain the site, paying a little less than \$6,000 a year in labor. To ship products shown on the site, he is looking to add overnight delivery soon.

While promotions such as an ugly door contest can promote your site, product selection will define your on-line niche. Armitage Ace Hardware of Chicago has been successful on the Web because the retailer has created sites for manufacturers, using name brands to draw in traffic to Web sites such as [www.webergrill.com](http://www.webergrill.com) and [www.colemanoutdoors.com](http://www.colemanoutdoors.com). The retailer's first site was posted in 1995.

"The (manufacturers) don't want to mess around with the individual, little orders," Armitage Ace's owner Brian O'Donnell says. "They're interested in volume, but we're able to make those individual sales."

Along with advancing technology, the march of the big boxes into the Windy City led Armitage Ace Hardware to expand into cyberspace. "Home Depot opened less than a mile away, and we knew we needed to compete in different ways," O'Donnell says.

O'Donnell employs a shipping and order processing staff to handle the Internet business, and he has plans to add more sites. "There's going to be a change in the whole marketplace," he says. "There are going to be more and more digital stores, and shopping on the Internet will replace shopping malls. I believe home centers will take a much bigger hit than they think, especially when the Internet goes through cable television."

#### BAITING THE HOOK

Having an easily recognizable Web address such as [www.webergrills.com](http://www.webergrills.com) is one way to attract customers to your site. But before the first cyber transaction can take place, retailers have to catch the eye of the buyer.

Several sites use step-by-step descriptions of how-to projects to get surfers to check out the sites. That's the key part of superbuild.com's strategy. The site has posted dozens of do-it-yourself projects, from installing a smoke detector to water heater maintenance. Along with an explanation of a project is a list of required material, which the viewer can click on to order. For example, the page that tells how to repair holes in drywall lists wallboard joint compound as a required material, and to order the compound, all the customer needs to do is click on the words.

Such ease of use and 24-hour access is driving Internet sales. According to Lawson, one of the most valued features on Thriftway Lumber's site is the ability to get estimates, even at 3 a.m.

"Our customers have said they like being able to get the information 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and they often make suggestions for different items to add," Lawson says.

In addition to providing pricing information, Thriftway Lumber gets traffic into its store by offering Internet-only coupons customers can print and bring to the store.

"The number of people stopping by the site is small, about 100 a day," Lawson says. "But what we have found is that people are bookmarking the pages with price information."

To attract visitors to its site, Rural King ([www.ruralking.com](http://www.ruralking.com)) has tried a little bit of everything, including fliers, advertising with on-line search engines and in local newspapers. To keep people coming back, Rural King updates its site at least once a week with new specials.

The two-year-old Rural King site offers about 40,000 products, with one employee dedicated to Web site maintenance. Internet site transactions

average about \$65 with purchases ranging from fittings costing a couple dollars to a \$1,000 mower.

"We're not selling a lot of hardlines," says Rural King Controller Don Davis. "We found specialty items, such as Breyer Horses collectibles, get us repeat customers and the hardlines are usually one-time customers."

Like superbuild.com, Wickes ([www.wickes.com](http://www.wickes.com)) has tried to increase sales by offering information about how to do certain projects, such as decks, garages and even two-story houses. Customers can get an on-line quote, a list of needed materials and even be put in contact with the nearest Wickes store. The project area is the most popular part of the two-year-old Wickes site, with about eight requests for project quotes per day.

However, the busiest section of the site is the commodity markets information page, which is updated every Friday. "That area gets hammered every Friday evening," says Gene Curtin, vice president of information systems.

In addition, Wickes recently began selling a wide variety of hand and power tools through a separate site, [www.toolsonline.com](http://www.toolsonline.com). It's further evidence that hand and power tools are the home improvement items most likely to be offered, and sold, over the Internet.

#### REELING IN SALES

As retailers cautiously wade into the Web, few are willing to fully disclose how much they have spent setting up their Web sites or how well sales are going.

Some, though, seem to be making money. O'Donnell wouldn't say whether Armitage's sites are profitable; however, he said that Web sales now account for 30 percent of the company's total business.

"It's like any other business venture," O'Donnell says. "You've got to ask yourself why you're doing it and whether it's producing any dollars. You've got to have some value coming back to you."

For other retailers, it's a matter of money versus marketing. While they may not make money selling items on the Web, they view it as an extension of their advertising programs. For example, Mattoon, Ill.-based Rural King, with 12 stores throughout Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky, has Web sales of about \$20,000 a year, but its site doesn't make money.

"We're losing money on the situation, but we still feel there's potential there," Davis says. "But when we look at the overall picture, we spend a lot of money on advertising, and the site costs us a small portion of advertising. When the site is thought of as advertising, then it's an inexpensive way customers can shop 365 days a year, 24 hours a day."

For some retailers, though, selling over the Internet doesn't make sense or dollars. Rick Karp, owner of San Francisco-based Cole Hardware, says he doesn't see a direct financial benefit from his extensive, three-year-old site ([www.colehardware.com](http://www.colehardware.com)).

"I consciously tried to stay away from fulfillment on the site," Karp says. "It's not something we could make a lot of money on. For Cole, it's a marketing or perception thing. We want to feed the 'oh wow' factor. We want to position ourselves as involved in our community and as being technologically advanced. It gives us an air of sophistication that tells people we're a tad more sophisticated than the average hardware store."

For Karp, the Internet presence was an extension of the 25,000-circulation monthly newsletter his company already produced. Much of the newsletter content is uploaded to the site. Karp pays a consultant about \$250 a month to maintain the site, which is updated every month.

Karp says he wouldn't recommend trying to sell to a specific geographic area. He says that a site must have some compelling interest to draw surfers in, such as specialty products or interesting content.

"The decision point is customer demand," Karp says. "For example, if there's a store that's in an upscale area or computer usage is proliferating among your customers and they're demanding information 24

hours a day, then it's a good thing to do.

"Having a Web site is not something that will give retailers a lot of bang for the buck," he adds. "It could turn into a money pit."

Dana Marcelini, controller of Elliott Ace Hardware in Elm Grove, Wis., agrees. The store began its site ([www.elliottace.com](http://www.elliottace.com)) in 1995 with an assortment of about 60 power tools. How many did they sell?

"Not a one," says Marcelini. "We put it up strictly as a curiosity to see what would happen. We now look at it as primarily a customer-service vehicle. We receive questions about products and about some of our pricing."

In the past year, Elliott Ace has made only about 10 sales over the Internet. To try to boost sales, the retailer included Internet-only specials in its e-mail bulletin, but that gimmick didn't help sales. In the past year, Elliott Ace has reduced its on-line offerings to include how-to books, but it hasn't sold any of those, either.

It costs Elliott Ace about \$100 to maintain the site, which was initially created as an extra project for an employee.

"From an advertising standpoint, it's worthwhile being out there and being available through e-mail," Marcelini says. "But I think there is something to touching the product, especially power tools. A lot of people will buy flowers by e-mail, but I think for general merchandise, most customers aren't comfortable buying without touching."

#### WHAT'S DOWNSTREAM?

What many retailers say is that some time in the future, in some way, the Internet will be a big part of hardware retailing. The only questions are "How?" and "When?"

"The new generation - those 30 years old and younger - are going to be used to buying on the Web," Lawson says. "What I see in a few years is people having the ability to casually comparison shop and put products side by side. Perhaps they will even be walking in stores with palm-held computers."

Already, there are signs of the importance of the Web: Thriftway Lumber is planning on installing a high-speed T-1 Internet connection, and in the future, Lawson may post on-line, how-to videos.

For O'Donnell, the most difficult problem has been dealing with the Internet-related growth. To handle the Internet business, he had to hire additional shipping and order processing staff. And at times, O'Donnell has a tough time staying in stock and must wait on manufacturers to ship merchandise to fulfill Internet orders. He predicts there will be changes on the suppliers' side to accommodate Web business.

"Inventories get depleted, and we don't know what's going to take the next hit," O'Donnell says. "When selling over the Internet, we can't base our stocking on past sales. There's no science to what we stock; we just try to take a percentage of prior season sales as a starting inventory and go from there."

Rural King's Davis advises retailers who are considering selling on the Web to remain dedicated to the medium.

"I don't feel at this time it's going to be a big profit center," Davis says. "But now is the time to get in and get a site built around what customers think is important so when people do start shopping the Web more, your site is there for them to use."

Davis also cites the time-saving potential and 24-hour access of the Web as other reasons it will become the shopping medium of the future. He also sees cost-saving possibilities for companies to reduce overhead with Web sites versus physical locations.

Wickes' Curtin believes one of the changes in the near future will be that manufacturers will improve their sites to have more information about product lines.

"By and large, manufacturers are still at the electronic brochure phase and the depth of information is limited," Curtin says. "We'd like to

be able to present more information to contractors about products and having manufacturers with more in-depth sites would be a way to do that."

Curtin draws the parallel between the beginnings of on-line stock trading and where the building and remodeling industry is now. "There was certainly some risk for brokerage companies to go on line and offer discounts for online trading. But they saw the huge potential market," he says. "The Internet is too easy not to use. I don't suggest it's going to replace retail stores, but it will be an important supplement."

Wholesalers believe in that potential and are encouraging their retailers to cast some lines onto the Web. But as O'Donnell points out, most retailer sites are informational rather than selling-oriented.

"If you're going to be a success, especially along the hardware lines, you need to take a special focus on one line or item and then do it in depth," he says. "People surfing the Web won't necessarily care about what's stocked in a local hardware store, but if you've got a site devoted to, say, every type of hinge, then you'll get some traffic and business."

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PRODUCT NAMES: \*5200000 (Retail Trade); 4811524 (Teleshopping Services)

INDUSTRY NAMES: BUSN (Any type of business); CNST (Construction and Materials); HOME (Home Furnishings); RETL (Retailing)

NAICS CODES: 514199 (All Other Information Services)

SPECIAL FEATURES: illustration; 0

SPECIAL FEATURES: INDUSTRY

ADVERTISING CODES: 25 New Electronic Marketing

?

/9/5 (Item 5 from file: 256)

DIALOG(R) File 256:SoftBase:Reviews,Companies&Prods.

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00106272 DOCUMENT TYPE: Review

PRODUCT NAMES: Richter Automated Merchandising System (687553)

TITLE: Flexed pricing

AUTHOR: Kay, Emily

SOURCE: Datamation, v44 n2 p58(4) Feb 1998

ISSN: 0011-6963

HOMEPAGE: <http://www.datamation.com>

RECORD TYPE: Review

REVIEW TYPE: Product Analysis

GRADE: Product Analysis, No Rating

A large music retail chain deployed Richter Systems International's Richter Automated Merchandising System (RAMS) to maintain a competitive variable-pricing scheme. The system allows the company to tailor its price structure according to the region, store, and competitive situation. Several other industries have embraced variable pricing, most notably supermarkets and consumer-packaged goods suppliers. Systems like RAMS help to reduce order management costs significantly, and many companies are deploying variable pricing software as part of larger supply-chain management systems. The music retail chain had to deploy the software to remain competitive and to offer better pricing in order to stay in business. The store now bases pricing on whatever criteria may be appropriate, such as competition nearby, or lack of competition nearby. RAMS runs on an HP 9000 T600 Enterprise Server. The store also operates a customer marketing system based on data warehousing technology. The store's solution allows it to implement a repeat performer program, which lists names of frequent buyers who get coupons good toward purchases on their next visit. The store also uses its variable-pricing software to manage customer loyalty programs, store promotions, and predictions of customer purchasing patterns.

COMPANY NAME: Richter Systems International (640824)

SPECIAL FEATURE: Charts Tables

DESCRIPTORS: Retailers; Music; Pricing; Sales Analysis; Data Warehouses; HP 9000; Marketing Information

REVISION DATE: 20010130

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4/9/12 (Item 12 from file: 570)  
DIALOG(R)File 570:Gale Group MARS(R)  
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01543311 Supplier Number: 46300086 (THIS IS THE FULLTEXT)

Web Marketplace - Halsey Minor Keynote 04/12/96

Newsbytes, pN/A

April 12, 1996

Language: English Record Type: Fulltext

Document Type: Newswire; Trade

Word Count: 351

TEXT:

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, U.S.A., 1996 APR 12 (NB) -- The president of the company that runs one of the "most successful" Internet World Wide Web sites in terms of both advertising revenues and visitors, said driving revenue from editorial content is "dicey," so selling ads will be crucial to stay in business. c/net president and founder, Halsey Minor, discussed the evolution of the Web as a new advertising medium at Jupiter Communications' Web Marketplace '96 Conference in Chicago.

Minor said that he sees an explosion of ads coming to the Web, even though most money for those ads comes from companies that are funding Web advertising from "experimental budgets."

But inhibitors to that growth exist, Minor said, including what he called the "perceived" issue of security, or what consumers see as the lack of security, on the Internet. He also said technology can inhibit making any money off the Web, because it is "simply hard" to sell anything on the Internet, except in categories like software.

Merchandising is also an inhibitor, because people are still learning how to sell electronically. The lack of a media infrastructure is the final inhibitor, Halsey said. "Companies have simply not built the kind of product that leverages the medium and brings buyers and sellers together in a way which facilitates transactions," he said. But ultimately, "the media creates the marketplace." he said. An example of this is the recent trend of targeted magazines that started in the 1980's. These publications created a new marketplace, especially in the area of computers and technology, he said.

Advertising on the Web does have advantages, he said. Pricing and product information can be updated in real time, Halsey said. Intelligent searches of products and services can also be performed, and agents can personalize the content for the seller, he said. In addition sound, video, graphics, text, and even separate programs like Java can enhance the selling experience. Finally, the Web is "always on" and open, he said.

By using branding and electronic commerce, "the Internet will become the most powerful medium ever created," Halsey said.

(Bob Woods/19960411)

THIS IS THE FULL TEXT: COPYRIGHT 1996 Newsbytes News Network

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PUBLISHER NAME: Newsbytes News Network

EVENT NAMES: \*240 (Marketing procedures)

GEOGRAPHIC NAMES: \*1USA (United States)

PRODUCT NAMES: \*9914280 (Electronic Marketing)

INDUSTRY NAMES: BUSN (Any type of business); CMPT (Computers and Office Automation); TELC (Telecommunications)

ADVERTISING CODES: 25 New Electronic Marketing; 32 Marketing/Advertising Methods

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15/9/13 (Item 13 from file: 570)  
DIALOG(R) File 570:Gale Group MARS(R)  
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01396295 Supplier Number: 44133521 (THIS IS THE FULLTEXT)

**Custom-Designed Ads**

Marketing Computers, v0, n0, p8

Oct, 1993

ISSN: 0895-5697

Language: English Record Type: Fulltext

Document Type: Magazine/Journal; Trade

Word Count: 358

**TEXT:**

Softad, Mill Valley, Calif., wants to promote its marketing expertise by providing companies with references and multimedia marketing and sales tools. The company specializes in developing electronic promotion pieces, building multimedia kiosks and custom designing productivity tools. Current customers include Apple Computer, Autodesk, Canon Europe, Central Point Software, Digital Equipment Corp., Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Prodigy, MCI and US West.

2 Most of these companies have asked Softad to develop promotional diskettes that either demonstrate a product or offer an animated tale of how the product works and what services are offered. Softad claims that because of the high retention factor, multimedia presentations offer a far more effective way of reaching customers than print-based ads or PR material.

3 Softad also designs sales automation and productivity tools that lets the user access information to determine appropriate pricing structures for potential clients. If a company wants to go all out, Softad will custom-design a kiosk that interactively demonstrates a product at trade shows or in other venues. Softad's kiosk for Cadillac can schedule a test drive as it provides information on pricing and anti-lock brakes.

'What we do for clients,' says founder Paula George, 'is help them understand what their marketing, communications and sales objectives are and how we can apply our technology to achieve those goals.' George started the company in the mid-'80s after noticing that the PC was primarily utilitarian and only being used for word processing and spreadsheets.

Why, she wondered, aren't more people using PCs to sell products and services? She couldn't think of an answer, so she started her own company to help fill a need and cash in on her vision. Something few realize, she stresses, is how effective multimedia advertising really is. 'The average retention for a magazine ad is about 2 seconds,' she explains. 'But multimedia is interactive; you have to be involved, making choices and entering and manipulating data. Retention rates double and even triple.' Her main complaint with the industry? 'Ad agencies are still very much hooked into the old way of doing things,' she says. 'They can't break the old habits. That's the industry's primary problem today.' Call (415) 332-4704.

- Michael Krantz

THIS IS THE FULL TEXT: COPYRIGHT 1993 BPI Communications, Inc.

Subscription: \$30.00 per year. Published monthly.

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PUBLISHER NAME: BPI Communications, Inc.

COMPANY NAMES: \*Softad

EVENT NAMES: \*240 (Marketing procedures)

GEOGRAPHIC NAMES: \*1USA (United States)

PRODUCT NAMES: \*7311000 (Advertising Agencies)

INDUSTRY NAMES: ADV (Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations); BUSN (Any type of business); CMPT (Computers and Office Automation)

NAICS CODES: 54181 (Advertising Agencies)

SPECIAL FEATURES: LOB; COMPANY

ADVERTISING AGENCY: Softad

ADVERTISING CODES: 25 New Electronic Marketing; 45 Agency  
Planning/Goals; 46 New Agency Services

?

TS3/FULL/2

3/9/2 (Item 2 from file: 570)  
DIALOG(R) File 570:Gale Group MARS(R)  
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01768375 Supplier Number: 54966936 (THIS IS THE FULLTEXT)

More MSOs Use Web Sites But How Well?

KRAMER, STACI D.

Multichannel News, v20, n25, p40

June 14, 1999

ISSN: 0276-8593

Language: English Record Type: Fulltext

Document Type: Magazine/Journal; Trade

Word Count: 4162

TEXT:

When Multichannel News first started to keep track of MSOs' Web sites, the list was a short one. These days, it's the rare MSO that doesn't have a presence on the Internet. But a tour of several dozen sites -- including the 23 featured below in individual reviews -- shows that MSOs don't always have a clear vision for their sites, or convey that vision to the user.

Is the site a corporate communications tool? Is it a way of providing customer service? Is it a sales and marketing device? Is it an employment clearinghouse?

The best sites incorporate all of those roles and employ a coherent design, meaningful content and appropriate use of software. Some one-dimensional sites, such as Comcast's corporate site, are well-organized and well-designed but leave the user who wants or needs more at a loss. Others try to be many things without doing any particularly well.

Some shine in one or two areas, but aren't able to replicate that success across the board. Nearly every site could benefit from a copy editor. Whichever the case, most Web sites are a work in progress - and those for MSOs are no exception.

The most disappointing sites were ones that failed to grow during the past year. Cablevision earned a rating of five again, not because it kept the same design, but because it built on what came before. Classic, last year's other five, slipped because it wasn't updated enough. Bresnan, which seemed so promising last year, slipped nearly a full point because it didn't deliver on its promise.

Several companies revamped their online image: Cox upgraded its look and its content, as did TCI and Harron Communications, which could take a prize for most improved -- if we gave one.

Among this year's trends: More sites are using ZIP code searches, providing consumers with access to personalized content. Most public companies are making the most of accessibility to stock quotes and online financial information. With advances in browsers, more Web masters are experimenting with Java, Shockwave and the like. Online customer service forms are so prevalent that it stands out when a site doesn't have one. Online job postings have become staple items, as more sites add job-search engines and online applications.

The following Web sites were rated on a scale of 1 to 5 with five areas in mind: style, usability, content, customer service and business information. The score given with each review represents an average of ratings in the five areas. The primary review computer was a Gateway P11450 with 128 megs of ram, a 19-inch Sony monitor and an ISDN connection.

Adelphia Cable

<http://www.adelphia.com>

The site's slogan is "Your Link for Everything" and Adelphia means it. Using bold images of various corporate endeavors, the front page allows visitors to head directly to the area they are most interested in: long

distance, digital cable, high-speed Internet access, paging or Adelphia's ISP. Click on the word "link" and you get "Digital Destinations" -- links to broadcast and cable network sites, among others.

But the presentation doesn't ensure success. For instance, clicking on digital cable brings up a stylish page of digital offerings, but choosing the link urging you to "call your Adelphia office today" only sends you back to the front page. The long-distance link offers a phone number to sign up, but no online option. Same goes for high-speed Internet access.

An online job search divided by categories adds a useful dimension. The corporate area includes access to thorough investor information, stock market material, financial documents in Adobe Acrobat format and archived press releases.

RATING: 3.6

Bresnan Communications Inc.

<http://www.bresnan.com>

Still snazzy in appearance, the site hasn't grown nearly enough since last year's review. For instance, the front page continues to tout the NCTA/Tech Corp.'s "Web Teacher" package as "new." The community highlights page promises more, but for now it's just a list of addresses and phone numbers.

No e-mail addresses, no links. No real information about the communities Bresnan serves.

Some decisions make very little sense. Users apparently are supposed to intuit that clicking on "What's Hot" for "News From Bresnan" will deliver, among other things, Bresnan's "Picks of the Net," "Cable in the Classroom," and media literacy. The "Customer Care Kit" explains Bresnan's policies, but customers who want to offer feedback or ask questions will have to go back to the community page and use the information there to make a phone call or write a letter.

Much is right with this site, but much, much more is possible.

RATING: 3.3

CableComm/Fanch Communications Inc.

<http://www.cablecomm.com>

This umbrella site for Fanch's CableComm systems provides links to a half-dozen local sites, each with its own distinct personality. Fanch manages 350 systems in 21 states, so the list seems sparse. This site could use a good image map of the locations and coverage area.

The front page is almost amateurish and at times, its organization seems haphazard. Still, consumers will find some of the content very useful, including a customer handbook with connection diagrams. And CableComm offers an online feedback form that includes questions that will help shape the site as it grows.

Jobs are posted online, but there is no online application. The flashy Johnstown site -- the Webmaster is in love with Shockwave and Flash 3 -- looks more corporate. Meshing the content of the corporate site with a slightly toned-down Johnstown look could be a good solution.

RATING: 2.8

Cable One

<http://www.cableone.net>

Ad sales, ISP sales and customer service are the main themes. The front page is a tad too long and a bit too busy, but gets the job done. With a quick scan of the to-the-point categories, visitors can head directly to the right area.

Those just coming online might prefer to start with the "new to the Internet" tutorial. Memo to the Webmaster: Great service, but not everyone uses Microsoft Internet Explorer -- even if that is the browser of choice for the CableOne ISP. Adding some instructions for Netscape Navigator would enhance a laudable effort.

Online ISP sign-up is another plus; the site also offers fairly deep

online technical support for the ISP.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for cable services. Off-site links are limited, but each system has its own channel lineup with links to networks and to local affiliates. Though still under construction, the ad-sales area is in some ways miles ahead of many other sites.

CableOne understands that advertisers want more than an e-mail address to ask for more information. Rate cards and coverage maps are a good start.

RATING: 3.3

Cablevision Systems Corp.  
<http://www.cablevision.com>

One of last year's top sites continues to grow. Among the most recent updates: the text of editorials from Cablevision's systems in Long Island, Connecticut and Westchester. Readers may respond to those views by filling out an online form.

There is also a Young Communicators micro-site, where high school students can post news stories and teachers can get media lesson plans.

Cablevision's site is the only one reviewed in which the Webmaster is not only identified by name -- and, in this case, shown in caricature, but acts as a guide. "Web-czar" Jennifer Thayer posts weekly messages about the site, encouraging feedback, highlighting various aspects of the site, and offering a reassuring presence with a light touch. More sites could benefit from ideas like this.

Cablevision has also pulled off, for the most part, the difficult task of being all things to all people. The main site is a gateway to myriad stand-alone sites or micro-sites about various facets of the huge corporation's operations.

In the customer service area, visitors can find the appropriate local office by typing a ZIP code or clicking on an image map. Once there, the available information includes customer service telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, a map and directions, and lists of the hardware and services available at that location.

RATING: 5

Century Communications Corp.  
<http://www.centurycomm.com>

A sleek front page that could be an entry in a Web design manual is marred only by a ticker at the top promoting an outdated special for Century's Back-Stage Pass holders. Links from a sharp nationwide image map of Century's cable systems lead to individualized contact information and channel lineups that also can be produced in a printer-friendly version using Adobe Acrobat's PDF format. Rates are not included.

The subscriber information area includes troubleshooting and setup tips, but there's no apparent online customer interaction. There's an e-mail address on the front page, along with the assurance that Century would like to hear from visitors, but no systematic way to make it happen.

The corporate area looks good on the surface, with access to all the right documents, including the 1998 annual report available in HTML and PDF formats. But a link titled "Meet the people who head up the very large 'Century Family'" turns out to be nothing more than a list of the board members and their titles.

Bios and pictures would be a plus here. Also, finding out about "operating entities" around the world suggests you'll click into more than a snazzy map from the annual report and a numbered list. Century also misses a chance to steer advertisers in the right direction.

RATING: 3.7

Charter Communications Inc.  
<http://www.chartercom.com>

It's tempting to give a site some leeway when the company is on a shopping spree. Charter's up front with the fact that its Web site is a work in progress, but it's impossible to ignore the Paul Allen factor. This

site is surprisingly slender for an outfit which calls itself "A Wired World Company" and is owned by a man who made his fortune as a computer visionary. Allen's own site -- [www.paulallen.com](http://www.paulallen.com) -- is slick and information packed. Charter, however, isn't even mentioned on the front page, and the information that is there isn't current.

"What's On This Month" brings up nothing but a months-old request to "stay tuned." The "Charter Zone" has a 10-question TV trivia quiz that apparently hasn't changed since early April. Don't look on the front page for news about mergers and acquisitions, but "Charter News" has plenty of press releases. Plenty of room to grow

RATING: 2.8

Classic Cable

<http://www.classic-cable.com>

This site still looks good and works well. It should, since it appears to have been barely touched since last year, when it was ranked one of the top sites. No new press releases have been posted since 1998.

Links aren't being updated as often as they could be -- a fact made obvious by following a few and realizing the description on the Web page no longer fits. A little updating would have kept this site on top.

RATING: 4.2

Coaxial Communications

<http://www.coaxial.net/>

The site has made some strides since last year, when Java applets routinely caused system crashes for the reviewer. Unlike most of the cable sites, the front page is compact enough to work well with screens as small as those on a laptop. Even though the front-page design looks organized and up-to-date, the site is organizationally challenged and doesn't deliver everything it promises.

The ad section looks deep -- deeper than it really is in some places. It takes a password from a salesperson to gain access to the rate section. The coverage map loads slowly -- when a graphic takes this long to load on an ISDN connection, you know it's slow. A job application is promised, but not delivered.

Nice touch: a touch-tone cheat sheet for customer service.

RATING: 2.5

Comcast Corp.

<http://www.comcast.com/>

No visible changes since last year, but at least this site is updated regularly. Comcast's site makes no pretense about providing customer service. It could improve as a corporate site by adding a company-wide job search engine to its online applications and by providing more information about its cable systems.

RATING: 3

Cox Communications Inc.

<http://www.cox.com/>

Cox has upgraded its site's look and content since last year's review. The result is a better-looking, more effective site for consumers, advertisers and investors. Information is divided into five categories -- Home, Business, School, In Your Area, and Corporate & Financial, with links for customer service, a site search engine, a site map and feedback on every page.

This complex site has its woes -- navigation can be confusing, especially once a visitor wanders into a local system's area -- but the pilot program for online customer information is especially promising and the career network touted on the front page is one of the best job sites in cable.

RATING: 4.5

Falcon Communications Inc.

[http:](http://www.falconcable.com)

[www.falconcable.com](http://www.falconcable.com)

Maybe when Charter acquires Falcon it can pick up some of the finer points of its Web site. (Finding out about the deal requires a visit to the press center.) The customer service area, for instance, would make a nice addition. A Falcon account number allows customers to check detailed billing information, order pay-per-view events online and check pending PPV orders. The "Talk to Us" section encourages e-mail to a divisional vice president or corporate headquarters. Each senior executive has a listed e-mail address.

Service can be upgraded online or service calls can be requested, but new accounts still require a phone call. A ZIP code search makes finding the right office a snap.

RATING: 4.5

Harron Communications  
<http://www.harron.com/>

If MCN offered a prize for most improved site, Harron would be a finalist. The switch to bright blue and gold as key colors and dividing the screen into four blocks for a geometric flair produced a bold, attractive statement. It would be even better if the page were compact enough to avoid scrolling, but that's a small point. At least the Web designer made good use of the real estate, offering a front-page ZIP code search for system-specific cable info and an invitation to sign up for service online, in addition to the usual links.

The design themes carry through from system to system, some with greater success than others. VCR Plus codes are a nice touch.

RATING: 4.8

Helicon  
<http://www.helicon.net>

The black background and slightly futuristic look of the gateway to Helicon's four Web areas implies sophistication. But the next stop on the tour doesn't follow through on that promise. It could -- the basic design is there. But as a woman who adds one too many pieces of jewelry can slip from stylish to junky, some designer couldn't resist adding elements until the result was a mess of links capped off by a rotating ad from a search engine partnership that looks way out of place. The front-page search engine is Webwide, not site-specific, as most might assume.

Clearly, a lot of effort has gone into the site. One example: Click on a movie or event in the clever pay-per-view page and information pops up on a television screen. But it's too inconsistent. Information is sparse and the Helicon mall doesn't follow through on its potential.

RATING: 2.8

Insight Communications  
<http://www.insight-com.com>

A clean, bright look marred only by an animated graphic competing with scrolling text. Unlike some sites, where every click seems to bring up a new look, Insight's look is consistent throughout -- sans animation and scrolls. The consistency's there when it comes to information, too. Each system has its own page with contacts, channel lineups and available services. There are linked e-mail addresses for regional managers or district vice presidents.

The business side could use more attention: the job listings are plentiful but unwieldy, the advertising page is under construction and corporate background is minimal.

All in all, though, Insight has an attractive, solid foundation on which to build.

RATING: 3.8

Jones Intercable Inc.  
<http://www.jic.com>

The site promises to blend consumer and corporate needs. The front page is a concise, clean design with access to a site search, current stock prices (the financials are hosted by PR Newswire) customer info, :press

center, investor resources and job postings.

All of the systems are listed with contact information, but online interaction is missing. Rates and pricing information requires phone or mail contact with the local office. In a deft move, Jones offers an e-mail notification service for media outlets. The corporate information is plentiful, although using PR Newswire adds layers and another browser window. Despite the site-wide links to job postings, the company is not posting employment listings online because that area is being redesigned.

Jones' "Watch & Learn" online media-literacy program makes the case for using MSO Web sites as more than an address book or program guide. One more Jones note: Jones@home [<http://jones.home.com>] promises amazingly fast downloads if you signup for the high-speed service. Maybe the crammed-with-elements page is intentionally slow [even on ISDN] to show visitors why they need the service.

RATING: 3.6

MediaOne

<http://www.mediaone.com>

Another site which makes you wonder if some MSOs are trying to sell their broadband service by producing slow front pages. Luckily for those without that option, the wait is worth it, as was a return trip after the page crashed the first time around. The site map can be used to navigate if Java is a problem; a front-page notice to ;that effect or, better, the chance to make the choice before entering the site would be a great improvement.

Unlike the sites of some companies in the midst of big deals, mergers are front-page news here. The press center opens as a new window but, annoyingly, it won't allow resizing and forces scrolling. The download area for executive photos and company graphics may be unique among MSOs. It shouldn't be. This service could be improved by adding JPEG to the list of file formats.

MediaOne SearchTV, a new programming search engine and guide, adds power. But the advertising sales information is limited to contact phone numbers and there's no email, with one exception.

RATING: 4.3

Media General Cable

<http://www.mgcable.com>

Busy and a little garish, Media General's site can be toned down by hitting the escape key and stopping the animated Road' Runner, used to tout high-speed Internet access, in his tracks. Playing to its audience, Media General provides front-page links to updated soccer and cricket schedules. The front page could be more effective and make a better visual statement by reducing the number of links in the navigation bar.

Excellent troubleshooting. The community page offered little more than a few links on one visit and didn't respond at all on a subsequent visit. Some details about advertising, but no online media kit.

RATING: 4.1

Prestige Cable

<http://www.prestigecable.com>

Significant improvement over last year. An efficient site with online feedback forms, well-organized programming links, and some other elements. Local information about rates, advertising and channel lineups is funneled into micro-sites for each system.

RATING: 3.6

Suburban Cable

[http:](http://suburban.com)

[suburban.com](http://suburban.com)

A pleasant, customer-oriented site that doesn't ignore its business responsibilities and manages to also look good. That design includes a "contact us" link for feedback in the top right-hand corner of every page and navigation links along the bottom. A particular plus: the resizable

page means the navigation tools are always available. There's also a site map and the ability to personalize the site by plugging a ZIP code into a Suburban service area.

The community area is broad and deep, making the best use of online resources. One example: The winners of an art contest are posted on the site in thumbnail images that can be enlarged with a click. The spotlight on customer service includes a front-page promo of "'satisfaction central."

RATING: 4.4

TCA Cable TV Inc.

<http://www.tca-cable.com>

Movement matters to someone at TCA. The front page sports a flashing bulletin about the Cox buyout with a link to the press release, an animated graphic for a navigational tool, and another animated graphic in the form of a vertical panel. The noise drowns out an otherwise strong design. The navigational tool called SiteRemote is a clever idea which gets lost in the translation. The nifty, remote-control-like mini window requires more attention than it should. An always-on-top option might help.

Another navigation problem: some of the content pages are far too long. Just because scrolling works doesn't mean it should be a necessity. Job applications can be printed out and faxed in, but users can't apply online via e-mail or by using an online resume as is the case at many other sites. The customer guide is online. Advertising is touched on but details are at the site of TCA's cable advertising subsidiary.

Systems have pages based on a simple template for channel listings, hyperlinks to networks, addresses, phone numbers, e-mail address and localized links to The Weather Channel.

RATING: 3.6

TCI

<http://www.tci.com>

Last year's verdict for TCI was looks great, less filling. Luckily, only half that statement holds today. More content doesn't mean enough, but it's a start. The front page is simple and to the point with four key elements: TCI The Company, TCI in Your Area, Questions and a ZIP code form for instant response on local customer services.

The ZIP code search brings up a list of communities covered; a channel lineup with links to network sites (some networks are unlinked, despite Web presence); an explanation of the bill, contact information (no e-mail address); and a FAQ that includes troubleshooting. TCI's The Company could use some work. The last annual report is from 1997. The job bank is detailed, but resumes must be faxed with cover letter and job code. The last "This just in" had a December 28 date. Some page load times are incredibly slow. Nothing more than press release info about AT&T; no clue about what that deal means for the Web site.

But there's an online comment form for customer relations. Looks great. More filling.

RATING: 4

Time Warner Cable

<http://www.pathfinder.com/corp/twcable>

This is what happens when you're a cog in a huge machine: a section on the corporate Web site that's little more than a blip. A press-release archive going back five years forms the core. There's a link to a list of local division sites and links to other elements of the corporate Web site that have something to do with the cable operation. A message at the top of the page suggests sending comments or questions to the address on your bill, or sending an e-mail message. The linked word "email" leads to a page with an image map of the U.S. Click on a state, and an e-mail form pops up with the ZIP codes for Time Warner systems in that state.

Other Time Warner properties manage to have full-fledged sites under the [pathfinder.com](http://www.pathfinder.com) umbrella. A company that claims to have the "world's most advanced" cable systems should be able to do the same.

RATING: 2.6

## How MSOs' Web Sites Rate

Operators	Style	Usability	Content	Cust. Ser.	Biz Info	Avg
Adelphia Cable	3.5	3	3	4	4.5	3.6
Bresnan Communications Co.	4	3.5	3	3	3	3.3
CableCOMM	2	3	3	3	3	2.8
CableOne	3	3	3.5	3	4	3.3
Cablevision	5	5	5	5	5	5
Century	5	4	3	3	3.5	3.7
Charter Communications	3	3	3	3		
3	2	2.8				
Classic Cable	5	4	4	5	3	4.2
Coaxial Communications	2	3	2	3	3	2.5
Comcast	3	3	4	0	5	3
Cox	4	4	5	4.5	5	4.5
Falcon Cable	4.5	4	4	5	5	4.5
General Communications	4	4	3.5	4.5	4.5	4.1
Harron Communications	5	4	5	5	5	4.8
Helicon Cable	3	3	3	3	2	2.8
Insight Communications	5	4	4	4	2	3.8
Jones Intercable	4	4	4	3	3	3.6
MediaOne	3.5	4	5	4	4	4.1
Media General Cable	4	3.5	4.5	4.5	4	4.1
Prestige Cable	4	3	4	4	3	3.6
Suburban Cable	4	5	4	5	4	4.4
TCA Cable TV	3.5	3.5	4	4	3	3.6
TCI	4.5	4	4	3.5	4	4
Time Warner Cable	2	2	2	3	4	2.6

Operators 1998  
 Adelphia Cable 3  
 Bresnan Communications Co. 4.2  
 CableCOMM

CableOne	
Cablevision	5
Century	
Charter Communications	3.2
Classic Cable	5
Coaxial Communications	2.8
Comcast	3.4
Cox	4.3
Falcon Cable	
General Communications	3
Harron Communications	3
Helicon Cable	
Insight Communications	
Jones Intercable	
MediaOne	4.2
Media General Cable	4.2
Prestige Cable	2.8
Suburban Cable	
TCA Cable TV	3.6
TCI	3.4
Time Warner Cable	

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